

## **QA9 – PKU & Cereal**

### **QUESTION:**

I have a question on introducing cereal to an infant who has PKU. This boy is now 8 months old. Mom is still breastfeeding and using Phenex-1 as prescribed. She has started giving him low phenylalanine (phe) fruits and a few vegetables and was wondering how much cereal to start with since it is high in phe. His levels have been consistently 5mg% since starting fruits/vegetables two months ago. How much cereal do you recommend giving at this age?

### **ANSWER:**

Our clinic policy is to recommend that families focus on introducing low-phe foods...fruits and vegetables, finger cereals (Kix, rice chex), low protein bread sticks, etc., and avoid offering foods with high or moderate amounts of phenylalanine. The low protein foods are used as experience rather than nourishment. There are several reasons for this line of thinking:

Children learn to accept specific foods through repeated exposures. Exposing an infant to a variety of low protein foods may make it easier to find a variety of low protein foods that are acceptable as he or she gets older. Although a few tablespoons of infant cereal may be satisfying now, it likely won't be enough later.

An infant's intake (amount and types of foods eaten) varies widely from day to day. For most children, this is fine; nutrient needs will be met over the course of several days. The phenylalanine intake of a child with PKU, however, needs to remain constant. Offering a variety of low protein foods and supplementing formula with milk helps to maintain a constant phenylalanine intake.

For infants who are primarily breastfed, infant cereal is a significant source of iron. For this infant with PKU, iron needs are met by his medical food, Phenex-1.

### **References:**

- 1) Satter E. How to Get Your Kid to Eat...But Not Too Much. Bull Publishing Co. 1987. Clinical experience, University of Washington PKU Clinic.